

Egyptian Cultural Profile

PLEASE NOTE: This profile provides an overview of some of the cultural information relating to the diverse groups of Egyptians who live in the Eastern Region of Melbourne. This description may not apply to all people as individual experiences may vary. However this profile can be used as a guide to some of the issues that may concern your clients. This is an update of the profile in the Home and Personal Care Kit developed by the MIC in 2004.

Introduction:

- The Egyptian community is one of the older non-English speaking communities in Australia.
- The Egyptian Christians (normally known as Copts) are the largest group of Egyptian-born people in Melbourne. (The Coptic Orthodox Church is one of the earliest Christian churches and it is the largest Christian community in the Middle East and is heavily concentrated in Egypt). Muslim Egyptians are the second largest community of Egyptian-born people in Melbourne.
- There is a smaller number of Egyptian-born Protestant and Catholics residing in Melbourne.
- People from the Egyptian community are generally highly educated.

Migration:

- The numbers of Egyptian Christians immigrating to Australia increased after the mid-1960s.
- The various Egyptian Christian communities exhibit a considerable amount of cohesion and have established churches in many parts of Melbourne, e.g. Preston, Hallam, Doncaster East and Oakleigh.
- The Egyptians came to Australia to pursue freedom (e.g. to get away from successive dictatorial political systems), better economical and social life. Some Christian Egyptians immigrated for religious freedom.
- Most Egyptian Muslims who immigrated to Australia arrived in the 1970s and early 1980s. Egypt-born Muslims have established a mosque at West Heidelberg.
- Egyptian-born Muslims are spread throughout Melbourne, in smaller numbers. Most migrated for employment opportunities.

Local Demographics: Egyptian-born residents in the Eastern Region

Local Government Area	Total Egyptian-born Population	50-59 years	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years and over	Total number of Egyptian-born people aged 65 and over	People aged 65+ as a % of the Egyptian-born population
City of Boroondara	232	56	65	29	20	73	31%
City of Knox	538	144	101	40	18	97	18%
City of Manningham	605	143	121	77	32	170	28%
City of Maroondah	83	15	18	6	7	22	27%
City of Monash	757	171	201	142	48	278	37%
City of Whitehorse	357	74	78	55	35	116	32%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	57	20	18	9	3	21	37%
Eastern Region	2629	623	602	358	163	777	30%

(ABS Census 2006 & MAV Data 2006)

- There were 11,581 Egyptian-born persons in Victoria at the last census (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- The median age of the Egyptian-born population is 56 years compared to 37 years for the total Victorian population (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).

Language: Arabic-speaking residents in the Eastern Region

Local Government Area	Total number of people speaking Arabic at home	50-59 years	60-69 years	70-79 years	80 years and over	Total number of Arabic speaking people aged 65 and over	Arabic speaking people aged 65+ as a % of the Arabic speaking population
City of Boroondara	447	46	40	22	0	32	7%
City of Knox	1125	143	102	34	6	70	6%
City of Manningham	1721	243	127	89	22	169	10%
City of Maroondah	324	19	15	12	3	21	6%
City of Monash	1083	157	108	54	19	122	11%
City of Whitehorse	578	50	50	24	9	50	9%
Shire of Yarra Ranges	175	14	12	8	0	11	6%
Eastern Region	5453	672	454	243	59	475	9%

(ABS Census 2006 & MAV Data 2006)

- The main language spoken by the Egyptian-born population is Arabic.
- More than 80% of the Egyptian-born population in Australia speak a language other than English at home.
- 7.6% of the Egyptian-born population in Victoria identified as speaking English 'not-well' and 2.0% spoke English 'not at all' (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- 42.9% of the Egyptian -born population in Victoria assessed themselves as speaking English 'very well' and 26.2% as 'well' (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008).
- Other languages used by some older Egyptian-born people are Italian, French, Maltese and Greek.

- Older women who are not in the workforce tend to have lower levels of English because of restricted access to social networks outside their immediate religious and family circles.

Religion:

The Egyptian-born population in Victoria identified as the following religions at the 2006 Census (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2008):

- Western Catholic – 26.9% (3,120)
- Coptic Orthodox – 25.6% (2,962)
- Greek Orthodox – 19.9% (2,304)
- Islam – 9.9% (1,144)
- Armenian Apost. – 1.6% (185)
- Other religions – 11.0% (1,270)
- No religion – 2.4% (273)
- Religious observances and related practices (such as fasting) should be noted for both Christian and Muslim Egyptian-born people.

Attitudes and Issues with Ageing:

- In the Egyptian-born community elders are highly respected by their community and their extended family.
- Services of health practitioners are highly appreciated. Egyptian-born people may be reluctant to express any difficulties or concerns they may have with service providers.

Attitudes to Disability and Mental Illness:

- Mental health issues and disability may not be fully understood within the Egyptian-born community.
- A child born with a disability or a person who became disabled is treated with the utmost compassion and care, although mental health and disability may be stigmatised within a small percentage of the Egyptian-born community.
- Many people in the Egyptian-born community would prefer to care for a family member who has a disability or mental health issue themselves, rather than having an outside carer.

Customs / Values:

- The Egyptian-born community is family oriented with an extended family structure.
- Social life revolves primarily around the family and Church or Mosque.
- A patriarchal social structure is the norm, although this is being challenged within the culture today.

Communication Styles:

- Egyptian-born people have an expressive communication style.
- Eye contact is valued as a sign of respect to the speaker.
- Shaking hands when greeting is appropriate between people of the same gender. Some Muslims refrain from shaking hands with people of the opposite gender.

Naming Conventions:

- Egyptian people prefer it if their titles and surnames are used when addressing them. For example, Mr, Mrs or Dr. unless otherwise directed.

Health Beliefs and Practices:

- Most Egyptian-born people follow the instruction of their medical practitioner. Some may use herbal remedies in conjunction with biomedical drugs.
- There is a tendency to keep sick patients warm, particularly those with a fever.
- Egyptian-born people tend to try drugs recommended by friends. They may stop taking medications once they 'feel better'.

Greetings:

English Greeting	Arabic	Closest English Pronunciation
Hello	أهلاً	AHLAN
Good Morning	الخير صباح	SABAH EL KHAIR
Good Afternoon	الخير مساءً	MASA' EL KHAIR
Goodbye	السلامة مع	MA'AL SALAMAH
Yes	أيوه	AYWAH
No	لا	LA'
Thankyou	متمشكر	MUTASHAKKIR

Key Egyptian Festivals / Significant Dates

- Sham al-Naseem 21st of March
(First day of spring celebration & the Coptic Orthodox Easter Monday)
- Revolution Day (Commemorating Egyptian independence) 23rd of July
- Easter and Christmas is an important focal point of celebration in the Coptic traditions.
- Muslims celebrate two Eid festivals each year (based on a lunar calendar).

* For other significant dates related to religious observances, refer to the Christian and Muslim religious profiles.

* To search for exact dates of key cultural and religious events, festivals and national days for this year, visit: <http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/a-diverse-australia/calendar-australia/>

Local services useful for Egyptian-born residents in the Eastern Region

Settlement Services

Provide information, referral and casework for refugees and family migrants who arrived in the last five years.

Name	Address	Contact
Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne)	Suite 2, Town Hall Hub, 27 Bank Street, Box Hill, 3128	Ph: 9285 4888
New Hope Migrant and Refugee Centre	18 Chester Street Oakleigh, 3166	Ph: 9563 4130

Aged Care & Disability Support Services

Migrant Information Centre Aged Care & Disability Services

Address: Suite 2, Town Hall Hub, 27 Bank Street, Box Hill, 3128

Ph: 9275 6905

The aged and disability team aims to increase access to aged care and disability services for CALD communities in the EMR through working with CALD communities to promote those services, provide information and referral and supporting organisations to provide culturally appropriate care. The team also receives funding for specific projects in this area.

Senior Citizens Groups

For more information please contact local councils or the Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne) on 9275 6905.

Name of the Club	LGA	Venue	Time / Day
Australian Coptic Senior Citizens' Club Manningham	Manningham	East Doncaster Hall 1 Anderson Creek Rd Doncaster East, 3109	10:30am – 3:30pm Thursday
Donvale Coptic Orthodox Centre Senior Citizens Club	Manningham	88-154 Park Rd Donvale, 3111	11:00am – 3:00pm Tuesday
Archangel Michael Seniors Social Club	Monash	136 Drummond St Oakleigh, 3166	10.30am – 2.00pm Thursday
Oakleigh Coptic Senior Social Club	Monash	Moorleigh Multicultural Centre 92 Bignell Rd East Bentleigh 3165	10:30am – 3:30pm Monday & Thursday

Other Support Services

Australian Coptic Society

Address: 355 Wellington Road, Mulgrave 3170

Ph: 0421 043 700

Meets on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month to provide programs and social contact for community members.

Egyptian Christian Association

Address: 40 Grattan Street, Prahran 3181

Ph: 0412 963 568

Meets on the 1st and 2nd Sunday (between 3pm – 6pm) of each month to provide social contact for community members.

Egyptian Federation of Victoria Inc

Address: PO Box 330, Endeavour Hills, 3802

Ph: 9708 0550

The Egyptian Federation of Victoria Inc runs programs and activities which support the community with their settlement, orientation, employment and training needs.

References:

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Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2008, *The Egypt-Born Community in Victoria*, Fact Sheet No. A-15, viewed 20 April 2010, <<http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/images/stories/pdf/egyptfs-24apr08.pdf>>.